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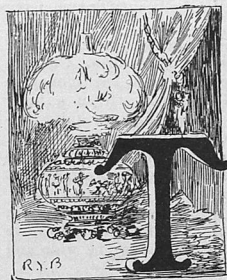
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## THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

### HOW TO BUILD THE HOUSE.

SOME THINGS ONE OUGHT NOT TO DO.

BY EDWARD W. BLAKELEY.



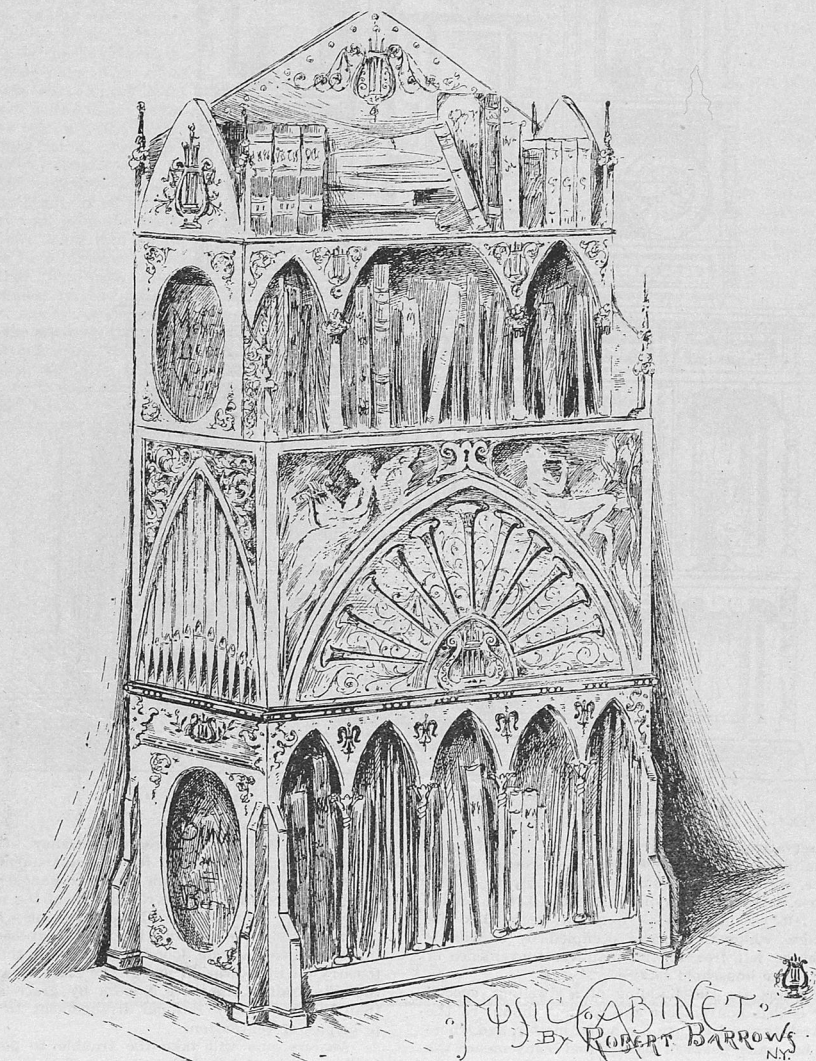
**T**HAT there are architects and architects, and that their work ranges from very good to indifferent and extremely bad, is a fact that no observant person will for a moment question. As it must moreover be admitted that the number of really first class architects is quite limited, it follows as a matter of course that there must be a great deal of questionable work done in the way of planning our dwellings and business buildings, especially in our large cities and towns. While recognizing the really excellent results produced by many of our most practical architects, and the magnificent buildings that adorn our own and other cities, it must be said that there are many residences where the flagrant disregard for everything but effect is so evident, that one might well wonder if ever an architect designed them, or if like Topsy they "grewed."

I have in mind a house where it is almost impossible to use any article that is of what might be called regular size. Without exception every room is some inches out of the regular width for a carpet, and in order to cover the floors a fraction of a width

must be put on one edge, and in the length, the carpet wastes in cutting according to the number of figures in the yard. Some of the rooms are quite large, and in selecting an elegant carpet for one of them it was found that as the desired style had one pattern to the yard, and there were eight lengths required, the waste on account of the awkward size of the room would be a trifle less than half a yard on every length of carpet. Two inches over a width must be added to the sides, which necessitated the purchase of an entire length in addition. The trifle more of width, while very little advantage to a room of that size, made six yards of carpet necessary in order to fill a few inches of space, and instead of calculating with any idea of economy the architect entailed a cost in carpet alone of nearly \$30 to cover a space two or three inches wide on two sides of a room. Whenever it became necessary to purchase or refit carpets for the floors in that house there was any amount of grumbling, and when at last it passed into other hands and was offered for rent, several persons refused it because of the enormous waste of carpets, the useless pieces alone costing more than enough to cover the floor of one good sized room.

The casings of all of the best rooms are very elaborate and project some distance into the apartment, and it is necessary to cut out not less than four inches from the edges of the carpets in order to fit them around the moldings. In this way the borders are almost destroyed, and it would be impossible to change them about or put them down in other than the original way.

The windows are about three inches wider than the ordinary, and shades must be made to order, a trifling item for the original owner, but of a great deal of importance when the house came to the renting stage. They are too narrow for fine effects



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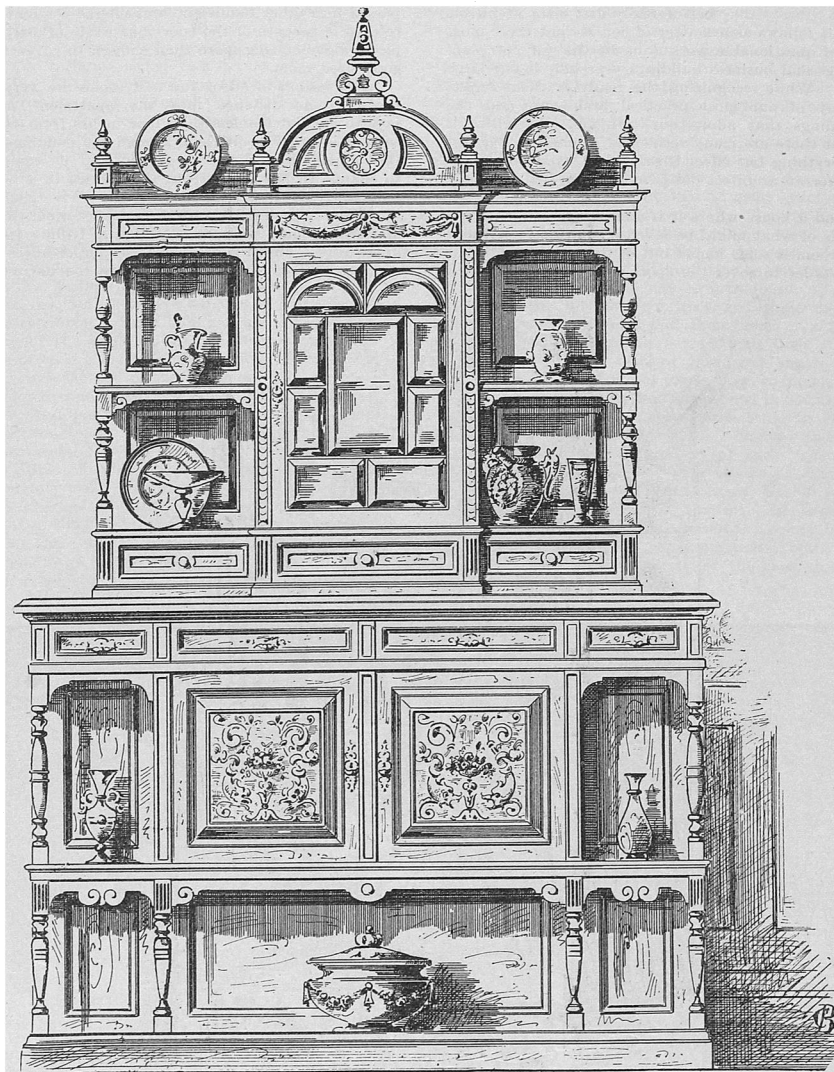
with two ordinary lace curtains, and could not well be used with more, and the curtain poles used in other houses will not fit at all. The spaces between the windows or doors are too narrow for ordinary articles of furniture, the hall is an eccentricity; and so it is all over the house; there appears to be a sort of vicious disregard for established usages, and it is as though the designer had been seized with a desire to make every item of fitting up and furnishing as expensive as possible, without in any way giving an adequate return either in comfort or convenience, or even in beauty of detail or general effect. It really is quite as easy to build a house properly, as to construct one which is so inconveniently shaped and badly fitted that nothing one may have will suit it.

There is need of a great deal more practical common sense than is ordinarily shown in the planning of houses. Between the

plan followed by the average architect, who is quite likely to ignore every principle that conflicts with the beauty or symmetry of his design.

There is an urgent demand for plans in which economy of space and simplicity of design are the leading features. Country people of moderate means have little time and less money to spend on architectural ornamentation or effect. Given a neat, comfortable dwelling at a moderate cost and they are quite content to dispense with angles, gables, and oriel windows until such time as the farm or the business is paid for, and the income will warrant their indulgence in some of the decorations and luxuries of life.

There is more useless room in the ordinary kitchen than in any other portion of the modern house. The idea seems to have come down through the years that a kitchen must be wide and



DESIGN FOR A SIDEBOARD, BY CARL BROEMEL.

traditions of conservatives and the technical knowledge of some of our professional architects the housekeeper fares rather badly. Economy of space, which in city residences especially is of the highest importance, is apparently quite disregarded, and angles and corners are left vacant when they might be used to the greatest advantage, while the spaces occupied by cupboards and closets could be left free to the manifest convenience of those who perform the household service.

In beginning plans for the building of a dwelling, special consideration for health, convenience and comfort should be the leading ideas. Architectural beauty is a minor matter, and where the choice must be made between beauty and convenience the former should always be sacrificed. This is not, however, the

roomy, and with a big throated chimney. Other points have not attached to the plans for this apartment, and upon this skeleton of a suggestion each architect hangs whatever convenience may, according to his conception of the needs of the place, be required. As a result we have for country houses great barn-like rooms, bitterly cold in winter, and exposed to the beating sun of summer, a wide doorstep, and a flue that is large enough to carry all the warm air out of the place in winter, and so wide that the draft of the stove is more by grace and the weather, than because of any rational arrangement to accord with the principles of ventilation.

Anyone who will take the trouble to go through a ship's kitchen will see at a glance what are the possibilities of economy

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of space. The entire stores for hundreds of persons may be prepared in a room fifteen feet square. It costs but little when building a house to provide sensible, practical conveniences in the way of pantries, cupboards and lockers, and the most trifling outlay may save any amount of hard work and time, which may be turned to valuable account.

Not many years since I heard a farmer's wife say that she had spent weeks of time carrying every drop of waste water through the kitchen and over the entire length of a long porch to throw it into a drain. It would have cost three or four dollars to run a pipe from the kitchen sink, under the porch to the drain, but this was deemed an unnecessary expense, and so this woman has walked a distance of over thirty feet and back from kitchen sink to drain on an average of eighteen to twenty times every day, and in summer weather even much more than this.

Her china closet is situated on the side of the dining-room opposite to the kitchen, and every dish must be carried across the dining-room to be put away. To get to the cellar she must cross kitchen and dining-room and go down the cellar under the main stairway, or else go half way around the house and enter by the outside cellar stairs. The milk is kept in a spring house at least one hundred feet from the door, and as there is no convenience there for washing the pans, all of the milk things must be brought to the house and washed.

The water for all of this work is drawn from a well with buckets and heated in a kettle or boiler on an ordinary stove. On the evening before washing day the wearisome task of getting the water ready must be gone through with. Bucketful after bucketful is drawn and poured into a barrel, and into this is thrown a little wood ashes, just how much the housewife is able to tell exactly by tasting it. Then all must be carried to the kitchen, and the work of washing may begin.

And yet these people are economical of everything except time and strength, or at least they think they are. But the cupola on the top of the house cost more than a set of stationary tubs would have done, with all of the drainage pipes and fittings to carry the waste water down a hill and into a small stream at the back of the house. The extra filligree work on the porches cost more than a well arranged cistern, and the outlay for a set of brackets under the edge of the roof would have built a cellar stairway twice over.

But under these unfavorable and laborious conditions an intelligent American family lived and toiled. That they prospered and grew wealthy was do doubt due to their energy and persistence, but when one takes into account how much more time there would have been for even necessary work, the thousand and one things that are always to be done in a farm house, it seems a poor comment on the good sense of the average individual to pay out money for architectural frivolities and unnecessary, and let the wife and daughters wear themselves out for lack of a few conveniences.

The china closet should be built in the wall between kitchen and dining-room, or in such a location that it is accessible from both rooms. Every house of any pretensions should have a drain sink from the kitchen or some point near the kitchen door, and

pipes to carry water away. If the house stands on an elevation this is a very easy matter. A well or pump should be so arranged that the task of drawing water will be as light as possible. A cistern should be built with every house, no matter how unpretentious. A few hours of work and a very small amount of material will be sufficient to provide a place for enough ice to last nearly all summer.

A couple of ingenious boys once made a most admirable arrangement of this sort at an almost nominal cost. They lived on a bit of table land at the foot of a hill. There was a spring in the side of the hill and a spring house for milk and butter. The boys dug a deep hole in the side of the hill above the spring house, smoothed the floor, sloped it slightly downward on the outer edge, and coated the bottom and sides with water-lime cement. There was a slight depression in the floor near the front, and from this a few feet of iron pipe led down into the ground and connected with a trough or spout made of the trunks of small saplings. These the energetic lads had contrived to split in two pieces, the middle was cut out by a gouge and hard work, and the two pieces of the sapling were then nailed together and connected with the iron pipe leading thence through three or four feet of earth to the spring house, where it ended over a trough. The bottom of the pit in the hill side was repeatedly washed and allowed to remain uncovered until snow fell. A large bundle of clean oat straw was placed over the pipe and carefully packed down. The floor of the pit then had about a foot deep of clean saw dust from the neighboring mill. This the mill owner was glad to get rid of and the boys to get it in large loads. A store of saw dust was laid by for future use.

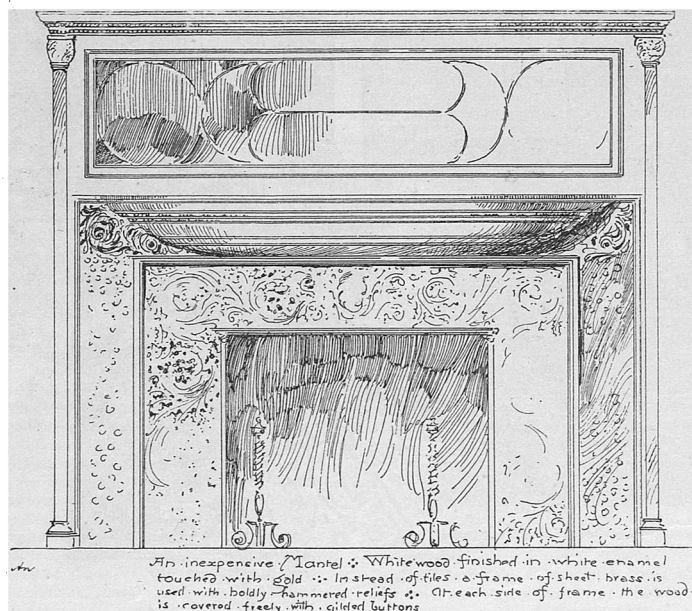
The pit was about twelve feet square by fifteen feet deep, and when the first snow fell the work began.

Every leisure moment was occupied in filling the pit with snow, packing it closely and pouring on just enough water to make it solid. As fast as the pit filled up the boys filled in the sides with a foot or more of saw dust. Long before spring the pit was full. Then a great mound of sawdust was piled over the ice and the earth was thrown over it. Above this were bundles of straw over which saw dust was sifted until it formed an almost solid mass, then more earth was piled on and a double row of Maderia roots was planted just at one edge.

In the case of this family other improvements followed this beginning, until the house had its own system of water-works, and by the time they had so prospered that a new house was to be built, the ingenious boys had perfected a plan by which not only their dwelling, but all of the farm buildings were abundantly supplied with water.

The cost of materials used for the first snow pit was less than five dollars, and it was estimated that the gain on its account in dairy products alone was not less than fifty dollars for the season. This is economy, and it is a kind that is much less common than it ought to be.

An excellent composition for molding is made of chalk, glue and paper pulp.



An inexpensive Mantel: Whitewood finished in white enamel touched with gold. Instead of tiles a frame of sheet brass is used with boldly hammered reliefs. On each side of frame the wood is covered freely with gilded buttons.